

WORKING DRAFT

Whitefish Urban Corridor Study of US Highway 93
Technical Memorandum – Task 18

Current/Planned Land Uses, Community Characteristics and Environmental Setting

Prepared For:

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM - TASK 18

Current/Planned Land Uses, Community Characteristics and Environmental Setting

INTRODUCTION

This Technical Memorandum examines current and planned land uses, key demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Whitefish community, and environmental considerations that could potentially influence the location or design of US 93 through the City of Whitefish. This memorandum presents the results of work associated with Task 18 in the Scope of Work for the Whitefish Transportation Plan and Urban Corridor Study.

Numerous planning documents address US 93 and the corridor study area including:

- U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and subsequent Record of Decision (ROD) signed in 1995;
- Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan approved by the City in April 2006;
- Whitefish City-County Growth Policy adopted by the City in November 2007; and
- Whitefish Transportation Plan (ongoing).

The Growth Policy and Downtown Business District Master Plan show that notable growth and development has occurred in the Whitefish area since the time of FEIS/ROD and offer a different “vision” for US 93 through Whitefish. For example, significant differences exist between the preferred design for US 93 identified in the FEIS/ROD and the recommendations for Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street outlined in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.

The City of Whitefish and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) are preparing a Transportation Plan that includes a detailed examination of the local road and street network examine and associated issues. The Transportation Plan will ultimately provide a comprehensive list of transportation improvements intended to meet community needs over the next 20 years.

Efforts are also underway in the community to revise the design of US 93 South (the area between Montana Highway 40 and 13th Street) to include raised landscaped medians. This “Median Plan” has generated local interest and preliminary plans for such a design change have been presented to the Whitefish City Council and the MDT.

This memorandum provides “baseline” information about current and anticipated land use and socio-economic conditions within the Whitefish community and identifies other environmental considerations that may be relevant to future decision-making about the US 93 corridor.

CORRIDOR STUDY AREA

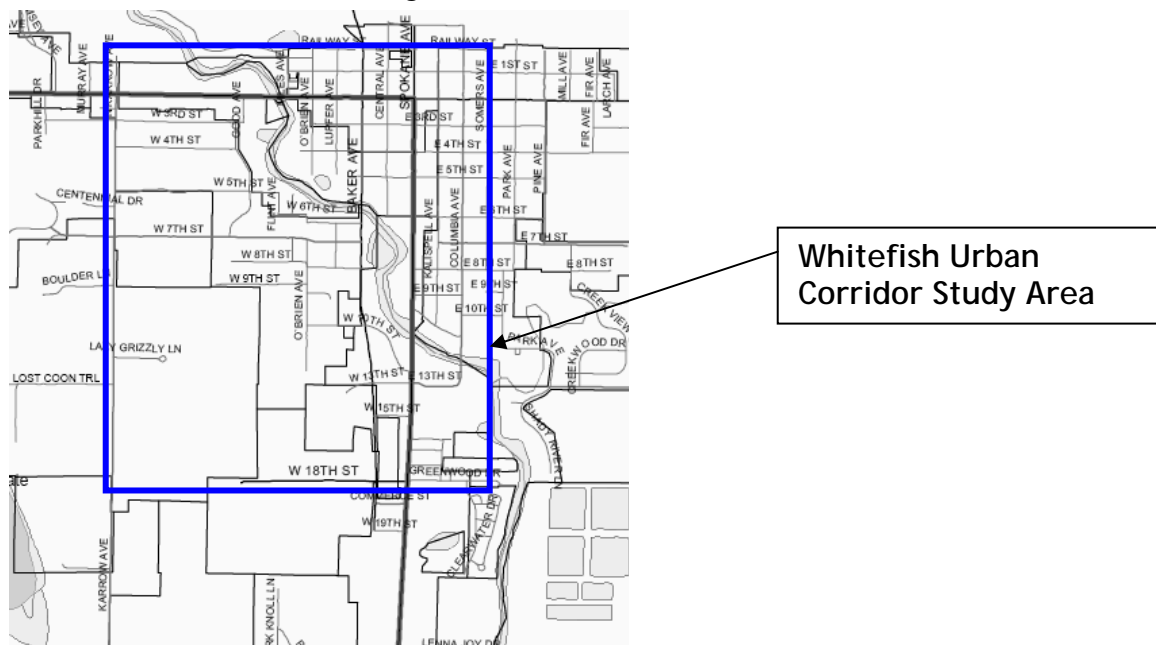
For purposes of this study, the Whitefish Urban Corridor is assumed to include the existing section of US 93 (Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street) from its intersection with 13th Street (Reference Post 126.9) north to 2nd Street and 2nd Street East from Spokane Avenue to just west of Baker Avenue

(Reference Post 127.8). This area corresponds to the previously established limits for the “Whitefish-Urban” project, designated by MDT as NH 5-3(80)127, UPN 4781.

The corridor includes the areas affected by the sub-alternatives for Location Alternative C (existing highway corridor) and considered in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS and the subsequent ROD on the FEIS in 1995. Specifically, this includes Baker Avenue from 2nd Street East to Spokane Avenue, and 7th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues.

The corridor study area is generally bounded to the east by Somers Avenue, Karrow Avenue to the west, the BNSF Railway to the north, and Greenwood Drive to the south. The broad study area selected to ensure areas beyond the limits of the Whitefish-Urban project limits receive consideration. The corridor study area is shown in **Figure 1**.

FIGURE 1: Corridor Study Area



CURRENT/PLANNED LAND USES IN THE CORRIDOR

This section describes the existing and likely future land uses within the US 93 corridor study area. The focus of this discussion is on land uses along Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue. The section concludes with information about land use plans and applicable land use regulations.

EXISTING CORRIDOR LAND USES

Highway-oriented businesses and services generally dominate US 93 between Montana Highway 40 (outside the corridor study area) and 13th Street. Numerous highway-oriented businesses, hotels, restaurants, and the Mountain Mall exist along Spokane Avenue south of 13th Street. Commercial uses dominate the area between 13th and 6th Streets including various retail establishments, restaurants, casinos, professional offices, auto sales and services, several hotels and motels, a supermarket, and convenience stores with fuel sales.

Between 6th and 4th Streets, Spokane Avenue passes through a traditional residential neighborhood being redeveloped with new uses. Single-family and multi-family homes in this area are interspersed with commercial and office uses that occupy several former residences along both sides of Spokane Avenue.

North of 4th Street, Spokane Avenue enters the commercial core of Whitefish. The commercial core area includes retail commercial uses, professional and government offices, financial institutions, restaurants and taverns, hotels, and art galleries and studios. Central School is located in the northeast quadrant of the Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street intersection. A new parking structure is under development on property northwest of the intersection.

The US 93 corridor turns west at 2nd Street and bisects Whitefish's central business district. Between Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue, 2nd Street is flanked by retail establishments, offices, and parking lots. Retail establishments and professional offices are the primary land uses along 2nd Street west of Baker Avenue. The intersection of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue is one of the City's busiest intersections. Notable land uses at the intersection of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue include the Whitefish City Hall building on the northeast corner, First American Bank on the northwest corner, and Glacier Banks on the southwest corner.

MDT has been unsuccessful in acquiring land for highway purposes from First American Bank property. On March 22, 2006, District Court Judge Katherine R. Curtiss entered a *Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order in Flathead County Cause No. DV-04-474(B)* that included the following determination:

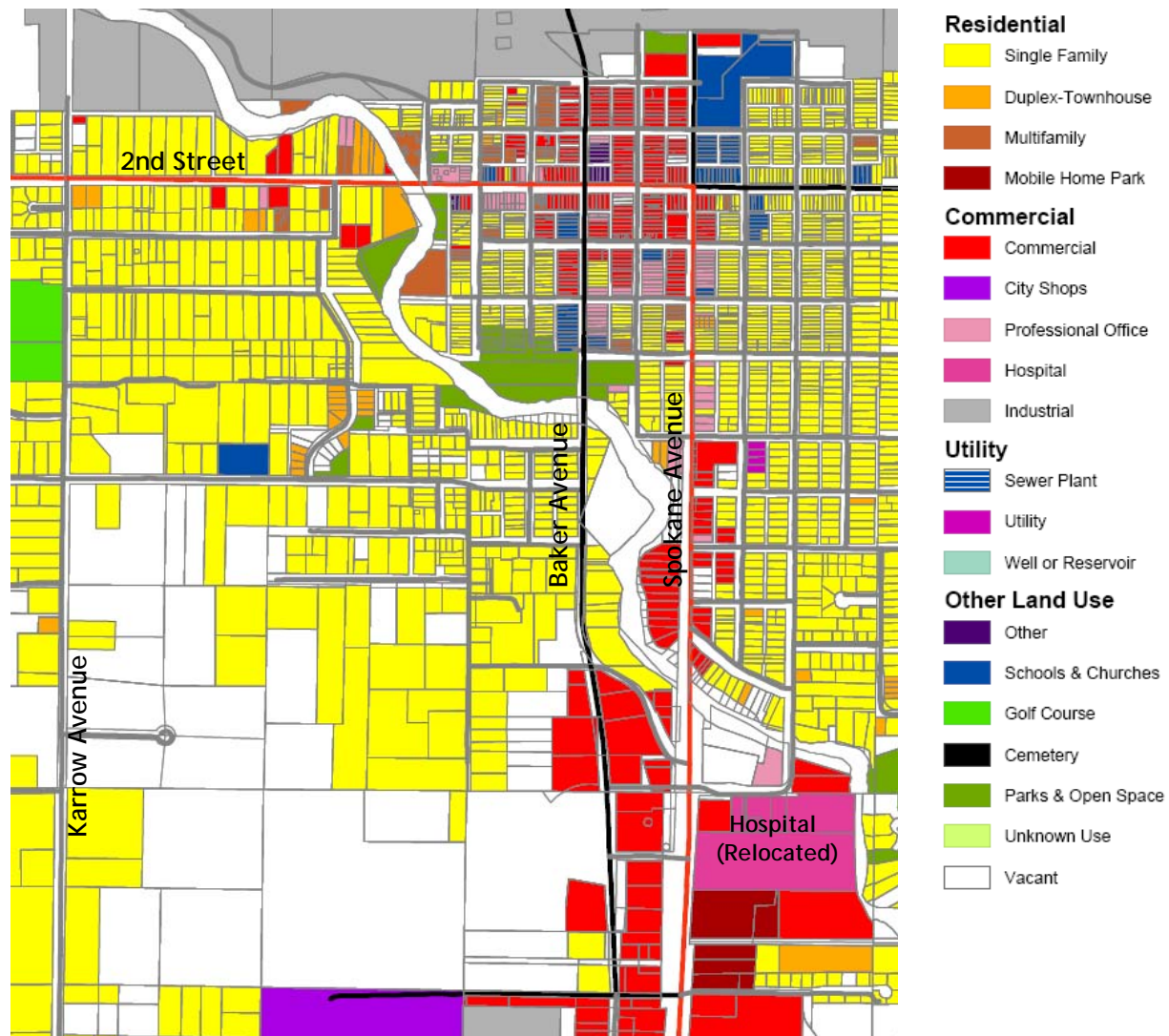
“The Court determines that the use to which the MDOT seeks to apply the property of Defendant American Bank is not a necessary public use authorized by law; it is not a more necessary public use than the existing public use; and the public interest does not require the taking of said property.”

The District Court then formally dismissed MDT's complaint “with prejudice.” With prejudice means that the right to bring a further action (i.e. condemnation) on the same property is precluded as the Court's determination is conclusive on the issue. Thus, any future improvements to the intersection of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue would have to be completed without taking any property from American Bank of Montana.

Baker Avenue is a major north-south roadway with the only grade-separated crossing of the BNSF Railway in Whitefish. North of 2nd Street, Baker Avenue serves public uses (Whitefish Fire Department) and commercial uses south of the Wisconsin Avenue overpass. Wisconsin Avenue serves residential areas, commercial uses, recreational sites, and is used to access the Whitefish Mountain Resort. Between 2nd Street and the Whitefish River, Baker Avenue serves a variety of land uses including retail and banking businesses, churches, the U.S. Post Office, and Riverside City Park. South of the river, Baker Avenue passes through a residential area before entering a newer commercial area between 10th and 13th Streets.

Figure 2 shows existing (2006) land uses in the corridor study area. The locations of Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue are highlighted on the map. Note the hospital shown in the lower right portion of **Figure 2** has been relocated to an area north of MT Highway 40 and east of US 93. The old hospital area is planned for redevelopment as a residential area.

FIGURE 2: Existing Land Use Map



Source: Land Use Element, 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy

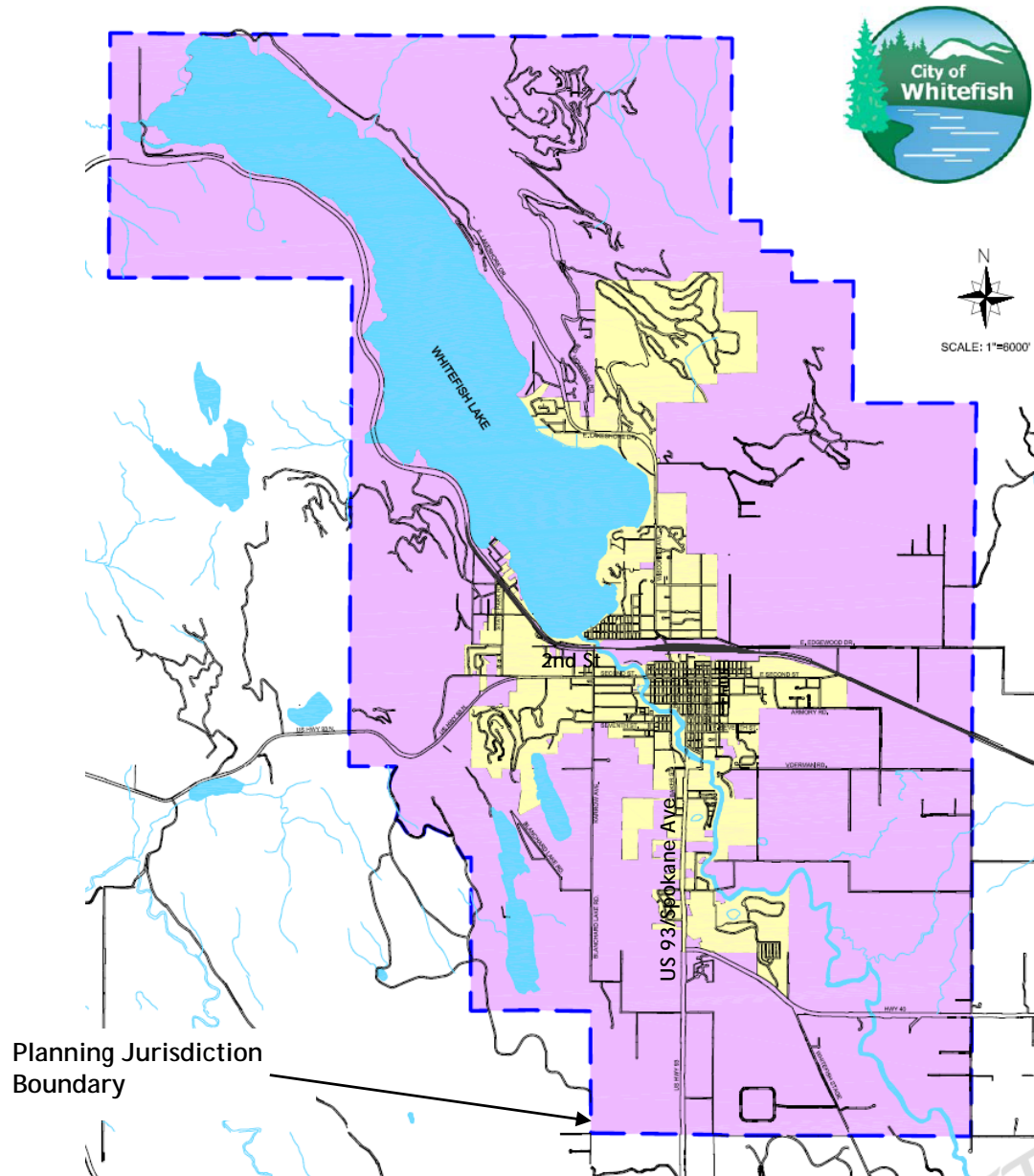
LAND USE PLANS

Guidance on land use planning within the City of Whitefish and its jurisdictional area is provided by the 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy adopted by the City Council on November 19, 2007. The new Growth Policy replaces the 1996 City-County Master Plan and is the result of a community-wide planning effort that began in January 2006. The Growth Policy reflects changed conditions in the Whitefish area since the 1996 Master Plan was adopted. A Growth Policy is required under Montana law for any local government intending to manage growth and development through zoning and subdivision regulations. The Growth Policy establishes a vision to guide growth and development in the community over the next 20 years. The document also identifies goals and policies and recommends actions for achieving those goals.

The Growth Policy addresses growth and development issues through detailed discussions of various elements including: natural resources, economic development, land use, community facilities,

housing, and transportation. The Growth Policy addresses land use and development within the Whitefish Planning Jurisdiction Area (highlighted on **Figure 3**).

FIGURE 3: Whitefish Planning Jurisdiction Area



Two key concepts apparent in the Growth Policy are the preservation of Whitefish’s “community character” and sustainability. Preservation of community character means maintaining and enhancing the qualities and resources that make Whitefish unique. With respect to land use and transportation, sustainability translates into compact growth patterns, mixed land uses, and multiple transportation choices to help reduce vehicle trips. The Growth Policy recognizes that managing growth is essential to preserving the community’s character and sustainability.

A key recommendation in the Growth Policy calls for the development of corridor plans for all major transportation corridors to address land use, transportation function and modes, noise, screening, landscaping, and all aspects of urban design. The areas of interest for such plans include US 93 South, US 93 North, Montana Highway 40, Wisconsin Avenue, and US 93/Spokane Avenue.

WHITEFISH DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan, approved by the Whitefish City Council in April 2006, outlines plans to redevelop the commercial core area of the City. The Plan, was jointly developed by the City of Whitefish and the Heart of Whitefish downtown business association in an effort to increase the vitality of the downtown area. The Plan identifies and evaluates the long range opportunities and needs of the downtown business district and recommends land use changes and new development ideas to ensure the long-term viability of the downtown.

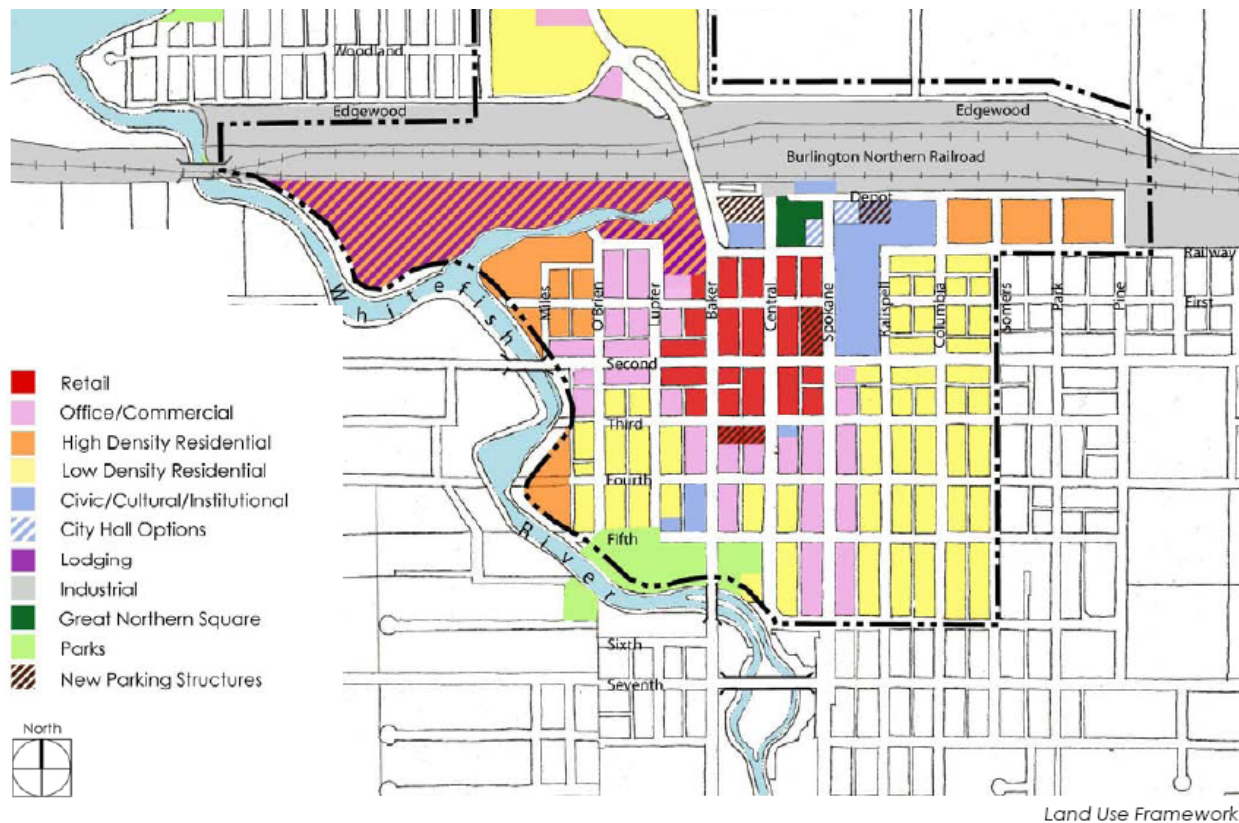
The Downtown Business District Master Plan has been developed around several guiding principals including:

- Ensuring downtown business vitality by keeping existing businesses healthy, providing opportunities for new businesses, and strengthening downtown retail through design improvements to streets and building facades.
- Encouraging improvements to US 93 that enhance and support downtown businesses.
- Providing a pedestrian-friendly environment to encourage visitors and residents to use downtown businesses and strengthening alternative transportation modes to reduce help reduce traffic congestion.
- Providing the necessary public infrastructure including new parking facilities to support downtown businesses and retail.
- Protecting the natural environment and using enhancements to strengthen the downtown area's appeal to visitors and residents.
- Identifying opportunities for mixed land uses (like higher density affordable housing) in the downtown area.

The Plan will be used by the City to guide the development of privately- and publicly-owned parcels and offers strategies for improving the appearance, function, and vitality of the downtown area. If the Plan were fully implemented, the downtown area could contain about 140,000 square feet (SF) of new retail space, 175,000 SF of existing and renovated retail space, 334 new residential units, and parking structures providing 740 spaces. **Figure 4** shows the land uses proposed for the downtown area of Whitefish according to the Downtown Business District Master Plan.

While there is no guarantee that the downtown will be developed entirely as proposed over the next 20 years, the City has already initiated efforts to implement several priority (or catalyst) projects identified in the Plan.

FIGURE 4: Proposed Land Use Framework from the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan



Source: Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan, Crandall Arambula PC, December 2005

The Downtown Business District Master Plan poses a number of notable changes to US 93 through downtown Whitefish including: (Revisions to US 93 require state approval)

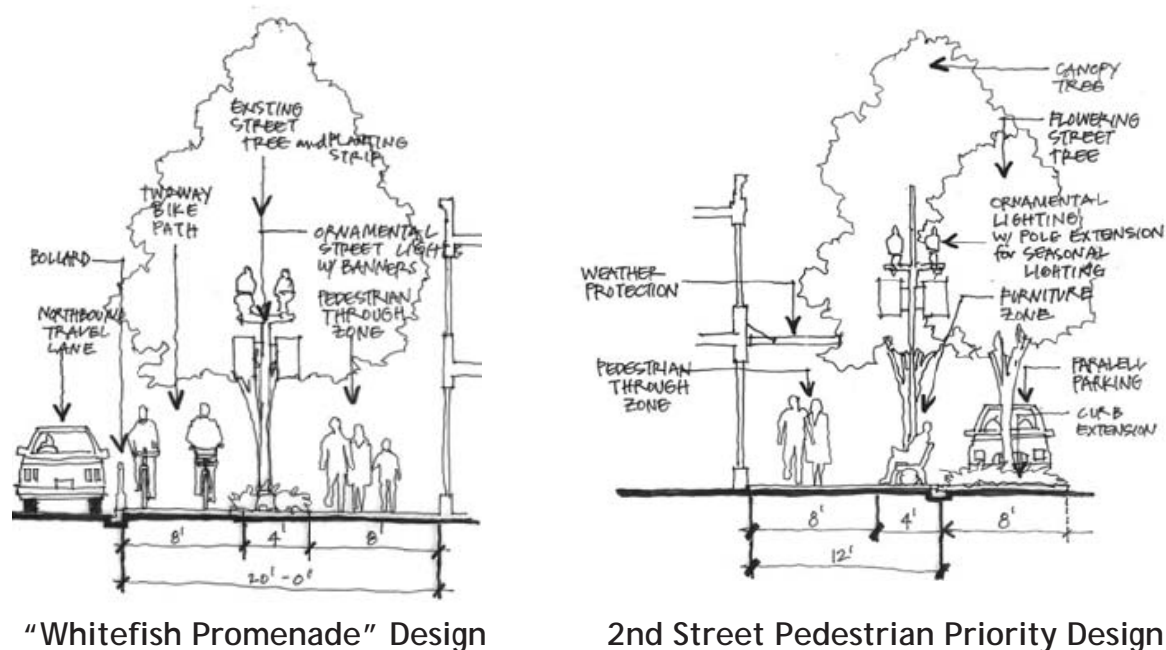
- Improving access and circulation by developing Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue as a couplet with a “contra-flow” lane (2 lanes in one direction with 1 opposing lane) on Baker Avenue.
- Maintaining on-street parking along both sides of 2nd Street for a half block east and west of Central Avenue.
- Providing a two-lane facility on 2nd Street and prohibiting left turn lanes from 2nd Street onto Central Avenue.
- Providing turn lanes and improving truck-turning radii at the intersection of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.
- Linking Spokane and Baker Avenues by providing a distinctively designed bridge across the Whitefish River at 7th Street.

Additionally, the Plan calls for extensive pedestrian improvements throughout the downtown to support and improve the viability of retail businesses, to improve pedestrian safety along and across 2nd Street, and provide connections to adjacent neighborhoods. The Plan recommends the development of the Whitefish Promenade— an off-street, multi-use recreational trail around the downtown— intended to link adjacent neighborhoods, the city’s pedestrian and bike network and

parklands along the Whitefish River. A portion of the Whitefish Promenade is proposed along the west side of Spokane Avenue from 7th Street to Railway Street. The Plan also called for a pedestrian-priority streetscape design for 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues.

Conceptual sketches illustrating recommended multi-use trail design along Spokane Avenue and pedestrian improvements along 2nd Street are shown below.

FIGURE 5: Proposed Pedestrian Designs along US 93



Source: Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan, Crandall Arambula PC, December 2005

Other recommendations from the Downtown Business District Master Plan would affect the existing US 93 corridor. A conceptual design has already been developed for a structure that includes 220 parking spaces on three floors and about 12,500 square feet of retail or office space on two floors on the northwest corner of the intersection of Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street. Streetscape improvements are also being designed for Central Avenue between Railway and 4th Streets. New crosswalks and curb extensions at each intersection with a special raised crosswalk at the intersection of Central Avenue and 2nd Street.

The Plan identifies the redevelopment of the City Hall property at the northeast corner of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue as a priority project. Two sites near the Library are being considered as locations for a new City Hall building. The existing City Hall property would be redeveloped with ground floor retail and upper floor office space.

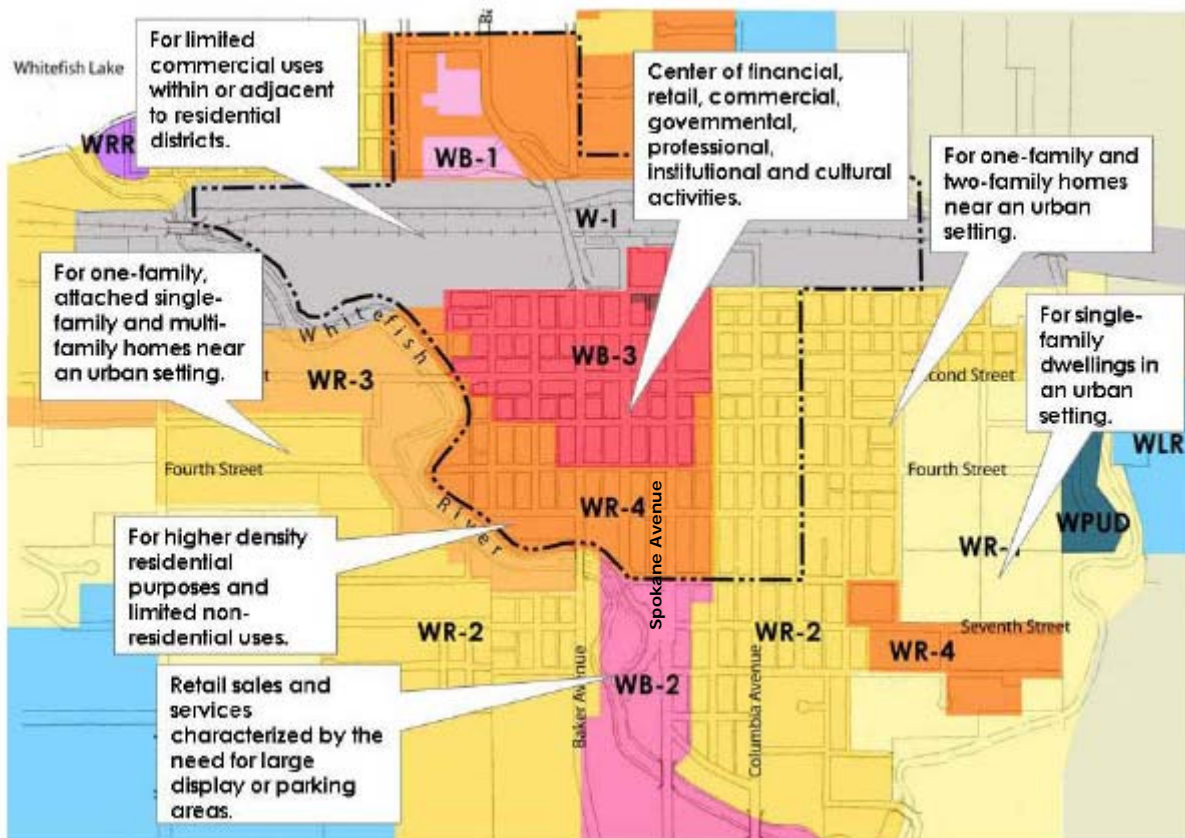
Further, the Plan recommends the development of "gateways" at locations where US 93 crosses the Whitefish River and enhancing the US 93 corridors entering Whitefish. Crossing locations on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street west of downtown would be enhanced with directional and information signage, signature lighting, and sidewalk improvements. Roadway border plantings, strategic screening of highway corridor commercial uses, and signing and lighting improvements were recommended as desirable enhancements for the US 93 corridors entering the City.

It is important to recognize that MDT is the road authority for US 93 (Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street) through Whitefish. Any proposed changes to these roadways will require MDT's concurrence.

EXISTING ZONING

Figure 6 shows City of Whitefish zoning districts within the corridor study area. As shown on the figure, most properties along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street have been zoned as WB-2 (Secondary Business District) and WB-3 (General Business District). WB-2 uses are generally intended for retail uses along highway corridors. Areas adjoining Spokane Avenue north of 4th Street and most of the area along 2nd between Spokane Avenue and the Whitefish River are zoned WB-3. The WB-3 district in Whitefish is intended for financial, retail, commercial, governmental, professional, institutional and cultural activities. Properties along Spokane Avenue between 6th and 4th Streets are zoned WR-4 which permits higher density residential uses and other conditional uses such as professional offices, galleries, and bed and breakfast inns.

FIGURE 6: Zoning Districts in the Corridor Study Area



Map Source: Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan, Crandall Arambula PC, December 2005

Properties along Baker Avenue between 2nd and 4th Streets fall within WB-3 (General Business District) zone. Lands adjoining Baker Avenue between 4th and 9th Streets fall within various residential zones of various densities (WR-2 and WR-4) before transitioning to the Secondary Business District (WB-2). A WR-3 District, intended for low-density multi-family residential uses

(single-family homes and duplex, triplex, and fourplex residential structures), exists west of the Whitefish River. A portion of this district adjoins Baker Avenue and includes properties north and south of 2nd Street in the area west of downtown Whitefish.

Future zoning changes will be required to implement the Downtown Business District Master Plan recommendations. The most notable changes will be necessary for lands in the W-I district along the south side of the BNSF Railway. This change will be needed to permit the future resort and high density residential development on lands presently occupied by BNSF facilities. Additionally, permitted uses in the WB-3 (General Business District) will need to be changed to allow for housing above the ground floor. The Downtown Business District Master Plan also recommended that consideration be given to eliminating parking space requirements for all uses in downtown and implementing a parking assessment fee to help fund the development of new parking structures.

FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Land Use Element of the City's Growth Policy provides a graphic representation of the type, density, and spatial extent of future growth in the Whitefish area. **Figure 7** shows a portion of the future land use map for the Whitefish area. Note that this figure generally incorporates land use changes identified in the Downtown Business District Master Plan previously presented in **Figure 4**.

The future land use map shows the lands adjoining the US 93 corridor are designated as "General Commercial" or "Core Commercial." General Commercial uses typically apply to the US 93 South corridor and include a variety of auto-oriented commercial and service uses. The primary access is by automobile with sufficient parking provided on site.

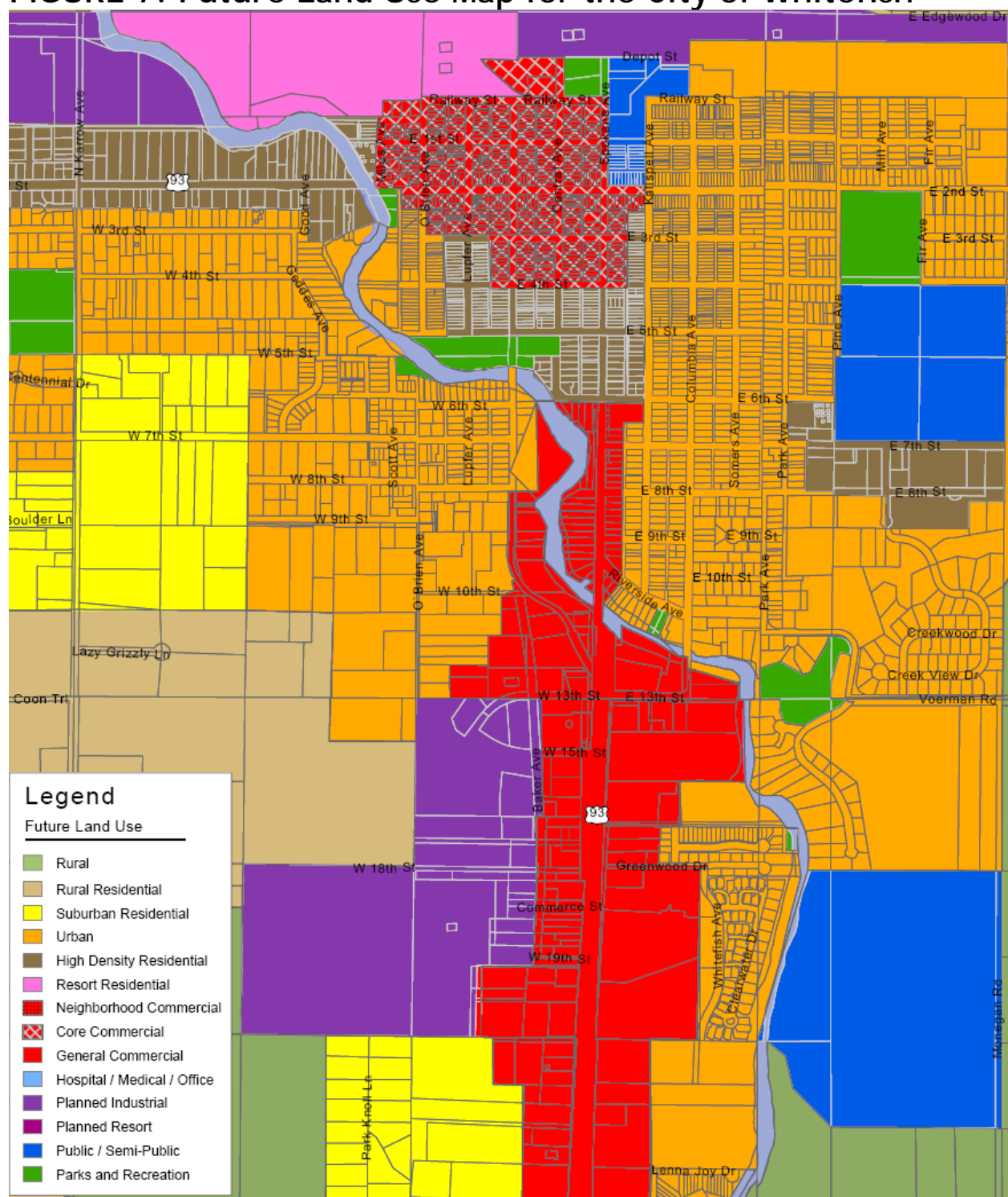
The Core Commercial designation applies to the downtown area of Whitefish and surrounding transitional and mixed use areas. The major uses in such areas include retail commercial, professional and government offices, financial institutions, restaurants and taverns, hotels, and art galleries and studios. Land uses and development patterns in the Commercial Core would be consistent with that described in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.

Lands along Baker Avenue have been designated for "High Density Residential", "Urban", "General Commercial" and "Planned Industrial Uses." Areas designated for High Density Residential development are mostly near the downtown and along major transportation routes and encompass multi-family residential units like apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.

The Urban category is a residential designation applied to the traditional neighborhoods near downtown Whitefish. Residential unit types are mostly one and two-family, but town homes and lower density apartments and condominiums could be appropriate in some areas. Limited neighborhood commercial located along arterial or collector streets are also included in this designation.

General Commercial and Planned Industrial Uses are designated along Baker Avenue in areas south of 8th Street. These areas provide for auto-oriented businesses and services and offer locations where industries will not compete against commercial development for land and impacts to residential neighborhoods can be minimized.

FIGURE 7: Future Land Use Map for the City of Whitefish



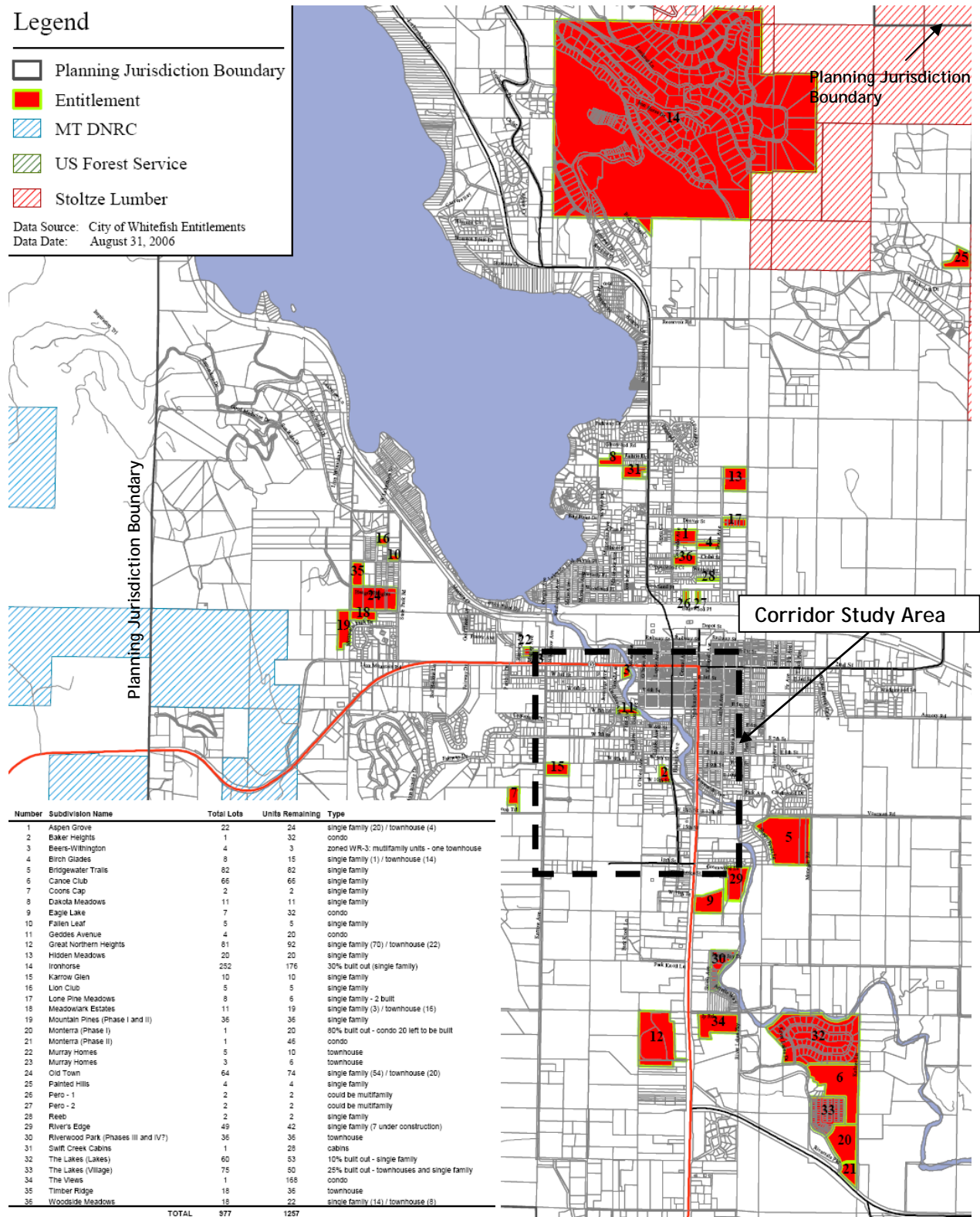
Map Source: 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy, Future Land Use-Detail Map #2 (South Section) adopted November 19, 2007.

Available at: http://planitwhitefish.com/pdf/growth_policy/FutureLandUse_CoreDetail_South.pdf

The City of Whitefish has examined areas within the community with development potential as a way to gauge where the community may grow in the future. **Figure 8** shows these areas (highlighted in red) and indicates that more than 2,400 new housing units could potentially be developed on the identified properties. It is important to note that already approved developments account for approximately 1,200 of these units and that some projects are partially built out and others have not yet begun construction. The City estimates at least 1,200 housing units could be built on vacant and/or underdeveloped lands in the planning area. The potential development areas shown on **Figure 8** do not include agricultural and forest lands near the City where extensive infrastructure improvements would be needed before development could occur.

The corridor study area contains several parcels with development potential, most notably along the Karrow Avenue corridor southwest of the downtown area and at the site of the former North Valley Hospital (located east of Spokane Avenue) where redevelopment has been proposed.

FIGURE 8: Future Development Potential in Whitefish



Map Source: 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy, Approved Entitlements Map. Available at:
http://planitwhitefish.com/pdf/growth_policy/Whitefish_LandUse_Entitlements_8511.pdf

COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population growth trends, household characteristics, and employment patterns are key factors in gauging transportation needs in Whitefish and the corridor study area. This part of the Corridor Study provides an overview of demographic characteristics in the City of Whitefish including data on population growth, density, race, age and ethnicity are presented as well as data on household income and size. These statistics are compared with those for Flathead County and the State of Montana where possible to identify relevant trends.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Historic Population Trends. Historically, the City of Whitefish's population fluctuated until 1960 when the community began a period of sustained growth. Whitefish grew rapidly between 1910 and 1920, reaching about 2,900 residents and nearly doubling its population in only a decade. The City's population fluctuated between 1920 and 1960 with a population ranging from about 2,600 to 3,200 over the period. The most notable increase occurred between 1940 and 1950 when the City grew by 26%. However, this decade of growth was followed by a 9% decline in population from 1950 to 1960. These changes in population directly corresponded to economic conditions and employment associated with the railroad.

Table 1 presents population data and growth rates for the Cities of Whitefish and Kalispell, Flathead County, and the State of Montana over the 1960 to 2000 period.

Beginning in 1960, the City's population showed stable and positive growth posting population increases ranging from 10% to 18% during successive decades to the year 2000. Over this 40 year period, the City's population increased by 70% from 2,965 to 5,032 residents. This sustained growth can be attributed to the City's economic base becoming more diversified and the community's emergence as a year round resort area. As **Table 1** shows, the City of Whitefish grew at a substantially higher rate than the City of Kalispell during the 1960 to 2000 period. However, the populations of Whitefish and Kalispell showed similar rates of increase over the 1980-2000 period.

Much of the population growth seen in Flathead County has occurred outside of the major cities in rural areas of the county. From 1960-2000, the rural population of Flathead County increased by nearly 190%. This long-term growth rate is substantially higher than those experienced in all of the cities in Flathead County over the same period. Several reasons contribute to this growth pattern. The rural quality of life is often more desirable than urban living for many residents. Development in rural areas is often attractive due to traditionally lower property taxes, a greater availability of less expensive land, and more permissive land use regulations. Additionally, cities have not always aggressively pursued annexation of adjoining suburban lands to accommodate growth.

The population of the City of Whitefish increased an average of about 1.7% per year over the 1960-2000 period. During this same time, the population of rural areas of Flathead County increased at a rate of 4.7% per year.

Over the 1980-2000 period, the City's annual population growth rate was slightly above the 40-year average (at 1.8% per year). The rate of growth for rural areas of Flathead County was about 2.5% per year during the same 20-year period.

Table 1: Historic Population Growth in Whitefish, Kalispell, Flathead County, and the State of Montana

US Census Population Data						
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1960-2000
City of Whitefish	2,965	3,349	3,703	4,368	5,032	+70%
City of Kalispell	10,740	10,526	10,689	11,917	14,223	+32%
Flathead County (Total)	32,965	39,460	51,966	59,218	74,471	+126%
Flathead County (Rural) *	17,717	22,933	34,462	40,012	51,571	+189%
State of Montana	674,767	694,409	786,690	799,065	902,195	+34%
Population Change by Decade (% change)						
	1960 -1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000		
City of Whitefish	+13.0%	+10.6%	+18.0%	+15.2%		
City of Kalispell	-2.0%	+1.5%	+11.5%	+19.3%		
Flathead County (Total)	+19.7%	+31.7%	+14.0%	+25.8%		
Flathead County (Rural)*	+29.4%	+50.0%	+16.1%	+28.9%		
State of Montana	+2.9%	+13.3%	+1.6%	+12.9%		

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (1960-2000)

* Rural Flathead County Population = Total County Population minus populations of incorporated cities in County

Population Trends Since 2000. As shown in **Table 2**, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the current (2006) population of the City of Whitefish at 7,723. This represents a total population change of more than 53% between 2000 and 2006 and translates to an average growth rate of 8.9% per year over the period. This rate is significantly higher than that experienced over the 1960-2000 period.

Table 2 also shows that notable growth continued in Flathead County with the annual rate of growth being about three times higher than that of the State of Montana for the period. The data shows the population of the City of Kalispell increased by about 37% over the past 6 years; however, rural areas of Flathead County experienced population growth of less than 4% over the same period. The population increases shown for Whitefish and other incorporated cities in the County over the past 6 years are likely due to recent annexations and the establishment of residences in previously approved developments in the communities.

Table 2: Current Population Estimates and Growth Rates

	2000 Census	2006** Estimate	% Change 2000-2006	% Annual Growth since 2006
City of Whitefish	5,032	7,723	+53.5%	8.9%
City of Kalispell	14,223	19,432	+36.6%	6.1%
Flathead County (Total)	74,471	85,314	+14.6%	2.4%
Flathead County (Rural)*	51,571	53,483	+3.7%	0.6%
State of Montana	902,195	944,632	+4.7%	0.8%

* Rural Flathead County Population = Total County Population minus populations of incorporated cities in County.

** Population data for 2006 are estimates as of July 1, 2006. Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places in Montana, by County: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006. Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau Release Date: June 28, 2007

The 2006 population of the corridor study area is estimated to be about 2,325 and was allocated among affected Census Block Groups as shown below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Current Corridor Study Area Population

Area Considered	2000 Population	Estimated 2006 Population
Corridor Study Area Total	2,067	2,325
Tract 3, Block Group 5 (part)	56	63
Tract 4, Block Group 2	769	865
Tract 4, Block Group 3	504	567
Tract 4, Block Group 4	212	238
Tract 4, Block Group 5	526	592

In-Migration. As discussed in previous sections, the populations of the City of Whitefish and Flathead County have increased notably since 1960. Migration patterns play a significant role in this growth. The U.S. Census Bureau provides information that helps illustrate how migration has affected the population of the City of Whitefish and Flathead County by providing data about where people lived 5 years prior to each Census.

According to the data from the 1980 Census, 25% of the City of Whitefish's residents (excluding children 5 years of age or under) were not living in Flathead County in the previous 5 years. In 1990, the number of people living in Whitefish who had moved from outside Flathead County in the previous 5 years had increased to 27% and half of those new residents had lived in another state five years earlier. These migration trends continued and became more pronounced by the year 2000. The number of people in Whitefish (excluding those 5 years of age and younger) who moved to Whitefish from outside Flathead County increased to 33% (1,560) and about 24% of the City's population had moved in from out of state in the past 5 years.

The Census data shows similar trends for Flathead County. In 1990, about 20% of the County's population had moved in from outside Flathead County in the previous 5 years. Data for the 2000 Census showed, 22% of the population had migrated to Flathead County over the previous 5 years. The *Flathead County Growth Policy* indicates that the majority of the estimated population increase since 2000 in Flathead County can be attributed to in-migration. The document suggests natural increases only account for about 18% of total population increase in the county since 2000.

These migration trends are due in part to the growing popularity of Whitefish and Flathead County as year round tourist and retirement destinations. New development in the County has also created year round construction employment opportunities and encouraged the in-migration of new permanent residents.

Seasonal Residents. There is a strong demand in Flathead County and the Whitefish area for second home ownership and for occasional use and vacation housing. Housing units dedicated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use have been identified and quantified in the Census. In 2000, 267 housing units in the City of Whitefish were occupied for occasional use, an 8% increase over the number of such housing units reported in the 1990. Similar data for Flathead County showed 3,570 housing units designated for occasional use as compared to 2,517 in 1990. This represented a 42% increase over the number of such housing units reported in 1990. During the 1990-2000 period, the total number of housing units in the City of Whitefish and Flathead County increased by 17% and 29%, respectively.

Census population numbers do not accurately account for seasonal fluctuations in population. Although there is no precise way to calculate seasonal population, a rough estimate can be derived

using the number of housing units dedicated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use and applying an average number of residents per housing unit. Following this procedure and assuming a small vacancy rate for occasional use housing units, the seasonal population in Whitefish could have easily accounted for another 400-500 persons in 2000.

Ethnicity. The City of Whitefish and Flathead County have very homogeneous racial populations. The 2000 Census indicates that about 96% of the total population of Whitefish and the County identified themselves as being Caucasians (white). The State of Montana is more diverse with about 91% of the population in 2000 identifying themselves as being of the white race.

Executive Order 12898 considers Black or African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders” as minority populations. These ethnic groups accounted for 3.8% of the City of Whitefish’s population and 3.2% of Flathead County’s population at the time of the 2000 Census.

Minority populations comprised about 3.3% of the population of the corridor study area at the time of the 2000 Census.

Age Distribution. Table 4 presents data for various age groups within in the City of Whitefish, Flathead County and the State of Montana. The table shows the percentage of the population that were of pre-school age, school age; working age, and retirement age at the time of each census since 1980. The following paragraphs describe changes within these age groups that have occurred in the City and County since 1980.

Table 4: Age Structure by Percent (1980-2000)
City of Whitefish, Flathead County, and State of Montana

Age Group	City of Whitefish			Flathead County			State of Montana		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
0-4	6.7	7.2	5.2	8.2	7.0	5.9	8.2	7.4	6.1
5-17	17.1	17.0	16.4	22.0	21.3	20.0	21.3	20.5	19.5
18-24	12.6	8.5	8.6	11.0	6.4	7.4	13.2	8.6	9.5
25-44	29.7	35.8	33.0	30.0	32.9	27.3	28.1	31.5	27.2
45-64	20.0	15.2	22.4	18.5	19.4	26.4	18.4	18.7	24.4
65+	13.9	16.3	14.4	10.3	12.9	13.0	10.7	13.3	13.4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Median Age	31.1	35.6	37.3	29.7	35.3	39.0	29.0	33.9	37.5

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (1980-2000)

Census data shows the pre-school age group declined in the City of Whitefish and Flathead County between 1980 and 2000. This trend has been experienced nationwide and occurred as the aging baby boom generation has moved out of child-rearing age and birth rates declined in succeeding generations. The Flathead County Growth Policy indicates the number of pre-school children in Flathead County appears to be on the rise with an over 8% increase since the 2000 Census.

The portion of the population in the school age group (ages 5 to 17 years) appears to be on the decline in the City of Whitefish and Flathead County. The slight decreases in this age group since 1980 may be attributed to declining birthrates, family size and an aging population.

Notable declines in the number of persons between 18 and 24 of age were apparent in both the City of Whitefish and Flathead County between 1980 and 1990. However, that trend also appears to have stabilized and population increases in this age group were realized by 2000.

The working age population, which includes those aged between 18 and 64, represents 64% and 61%, respectively, of the City of Whitefish's and Flathead County's total population in 2000. This represents a slight increase over the percentage of working age persons for both the City and County at the time of the 1980 Census.

The most notable trend since 1980 has been the increase in retirement age people in Flathead County and Whitefish. In 1980, people in the retirement age group accounted for 10% of the County's population and about 14% of the City's population. The 65 and over age group now represents about 13% of the County's total population and nearly 14.5% of the City's population. This trend can be generally attributed to increased life expectancy and aging populations across the country; however, it also shows Flathead County has become a retirement destination.

As the population of the City of Whitefish and Flathead County has continued to grow, it has also aged. The median age of Whitefish residents at the time of the 2000 Census was 37.3 as compared to 39.0 and 37.5 for Flathead County and the State of Montana, respectively. As **Table 4** showed, the median age of Montana residents (including those in the City of Whitefish and Flathead County) has increased notably since 1980. This trend is generally consistent across the United States and is the result of the gradual aging of the baby boomer generation (those persons born 15-20 years after World War II).

Household Size and Owner-Renter Status. According to the 2000 Census, the average household size for the City of Whitefish was 2.20, down slightly from 2.33 persons per household in 1990. For owner occupied homes, the average household size was 2.30 persons per household and for renter occupied households, the average household size was 2.07 persons per household. The average household size in Whitefish was lower than both Flathead County and the State of Montana at the time of the 2000 Census.

About 55% of the housing units in the City of Whitefish were owner-occupied and 45% were renter-occupied in 2000. The percentage of owner-occupied housing units in Whitefish was well below that of both Flathead County (73%) and the State of Montana (69%).

PERSONAL TRAVEL AND COMMUTING CHARACTERISTICS

Household Vehicle Ownership. As shown below in **Table 5**, 95% of the households in the City of Whitefish and Flathead County owned at least one vehicle at the time of the 2000 Census. Information for Census Blocks within the corridor study area shows each household contained an average of 1.73 vehicles in 2000.

Data compiled for 2005 from the U.S. Bureau of the Census American Community Survey shows 98% of the households in Flathead County owned at least one vehicle. Updated information on vehicle ownership in the City of Whitefish is not available.

Table 5: Vehicles Available in Households

	2000			2005	
	City of Whitefish %	Flathead County %	State of Montana %	Flathead County %	State of Montana %
Households with No Vehicles	5.1	4.5	6.1	2.0	4.6
Households with 1 Vehicle	42.1	28.0	29.8	26.0	28.0
Households with 2 Vehicles	36.2	42.2	38.9	37.1	38.6
Households with 3+ Vehicles	16.6	25.4	25.2	34.8	28.8

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (2000) and American Community Survey: 2005 Transportation Profile for Flathead County available at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census/2005tp/placeofwork/flathead_county_montana.htm

Mode of Transportation to Work. Information about the modes of transportation to work by residents in the City of Whitefish, Flathead County, and the State of Montana is shown in **Table 6**. The table shows the majority of residents in all geographic areas rely on personal vehicles or carpools for transportation to work destinations. The data shows that about 83% of Whitefish residents use personal vehicles or carpool to work as compared to nearly 90% of county residents and about 86% of state residents. A higher percentage of Whitefish residents also rely on buses for transportation to work and walk or bicycle to work than do Flathead County or Montana residents.

Table 6: 2000 Mode of Transportation to Work

Transportation Mode	City of Whitefish	City of Whitefish %	Flathead County	Flathead County %	Montana	Montana %
Drove Alone	1,576	69.4%	26,229	77.0%	311,872	73.9%
Carpool	307	13.5%	4,139	12.2%	50,192	11.9%
Bus	54	2.4%	114	0.3%	2,441	0.6%
Streetcar	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	96	0.0%
Railroad/Subway	0	0.0%	4	0.0%	79	0.0%
Ferry	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29	0.0%
Taxicab	0	0.0%	18	0.1%	167	0.0%
Walk	172	7.6%	1,373	4.0%	23,336	5.5%
Motorcycle	0	0.0%	14	0.0%	338	0.1%
Bicycle	27	1.2%	201	0.6%	4,049	1.0%
Other	0	0.0%	232	0.7%	2,649	0.6%
Work at Home	135	5.9%	1,721	5.1%	26,911	6.4%
Average Travel Time	14.6 minutes		19.0 minutes		17.7 minutes	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, STF-3

County to County Worker Flow. Census data for 2000 shows that about 97% of the workers residing in Flathead County work at jobs within the county. About 1% of workers residing in Flathead County commuted to work destination out of state and the remainder were commuters to nearby counties. Similar detailed data about work destinations for Whitefish residents is unavailable.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes assure that individuals are not excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender or disability. Executive Order 12898 directs Federal agencies to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate,

disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

“Disproportionately high and adverse effect” on minority and low-income populations means an adverse effect that:

- Is predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income populations; or
- Will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population.

The Executive Order identifies minority communities as “Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander” and defines low income as a person whose median household income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.

Minority Populations. According to 2000 Census data, two Census Block Groups within the corridor study area have minority populations higher than that of Flathead County (summarized in **Table 7**). The table also indicates the number of Census Blocks (the smallest census reporting unit) within each tract with percentages of minority populations exceeding that of the County.

As the table indicates, the percentage of minority populations within the entire corridor study area is similar to the County average. Analysis shows two Census Block Groups within the corridor study area contain minority populations that exceed the County average. However, the percentage of minority populations within the identified Block Groups is still well below the statewide average. The overall percentage of minority populations for the entire corridor study area is very near the County average and does not indicate that minority populations would be disproportionately affected.

Table 7: Census Block Groups with Minority Populations Greater than the County Average at the time of the 2000 Census

Area Considered	Total Population	Total Minority Population	Percent Minority
State of Montana	902,195	82,002	9.1%
Flathead County	74,471	2,420	3.2%
Whitefish City	5,032	192	3.8%
Corridor Study Area Total	2,067	69	3.3%
Tract 3, Block Group 5 (part)	56	0	0.0% (0 Blocks)*
Tract 4, Block Group 2	769	15	1.9% (5 Blocks)*
Tract 4, Block Group 3	504	29	5.7% (11 Blocks)*
Tract 4, Block Group 4	212	12	5.7% (6 Blocks)*
Tract 4, Block Group 5	526	13	2.5% (8 Blocks)*

* Number of individual Blocks within each Census Block Group with percentages of minority populations exceeding that of Flathead County.

Low-Income Populations. The median household income levels reported in the 2000 Census in Flathead County and the City of Whitefish were (respectively) \$34,466 and \$33,038, both of which were slightly higher than the median household income for the State of Montana (\$33,024). Recent

(2004) estimates of median household income prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that income levels in Flathead County (\$39,885) have risen substantially above the statewide median income (\$35,574). This indicates that households within Flathead County earn, on average, about 12% more than what is earned by an average Montana household. 2004 estimates of median household income for the City of Whitefish are not available for comparison.

The State of Montana Department of Commerce relies upon statutory definitions of “low” and “moderate” (LMI) income levels provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the administration of federal housing programs and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. “Moderate income” is defined as from 50% to 80% of median family income and “low income” includes family income below 50% of median family income. These categories correspond to the low-income and very low-income categories used by HUD. The specific income limits used to define “low and moderate income” are adjusted annually to account for household size and inflation for each of Montana’s counties. The percentages of families at LMI income levels for Flathead County and the City of Whitefish are 38.7% and 39.7%, respectively.

The Montana Department of Commerce has developed maps showing those areas of counties and incorporated cities which have populations over 51% low and moderate income to assist local governments in identifying their community development needs. These maps are particularly useful in identifying geographic concentrations of low and moderate income households. **Figure 9** shows Census Tracts and Block Groups in the Whitefish area with populations over 51 percent low and moderate income. Three Census Block Groups within the general corridor study area (Tract 3, Block Group 5; Tract 4, Block Group 4; and Tract 4, Block Group 5) contain overall LMI percentages greater than that of the County. Only Tract 4, Block Group 5 exceeds the 51% LMI threshold.

Poverty Status. According to 2000 Census data, the number of residents living below the poverty line was higher for the City of Whitefish than for the State and Flathead County. About 14.2% of all individuals living in Montana were below the poverty line in 2000. Census data shows 13.0% and 18.2% of the individuals living in Flathead County and City of Whitefish, respectively, were living in poverty in 2000.

A review of Census data showed the percent of individuals living in poverty exceeded that of Flathead County and the City of Whitefish in Census Tract 4 and Block Group 3 (40.0%) and in Census Tract 4 and Block Group 5 (32.5%). Flathead County has developed maps showing the percentage of individuals living in poverty by Census Tracts and Block Groups. **Figure 10** shows such a map for the Whitefish area.

FIGURE 9: LMI for Whitefish Corridor Study Area

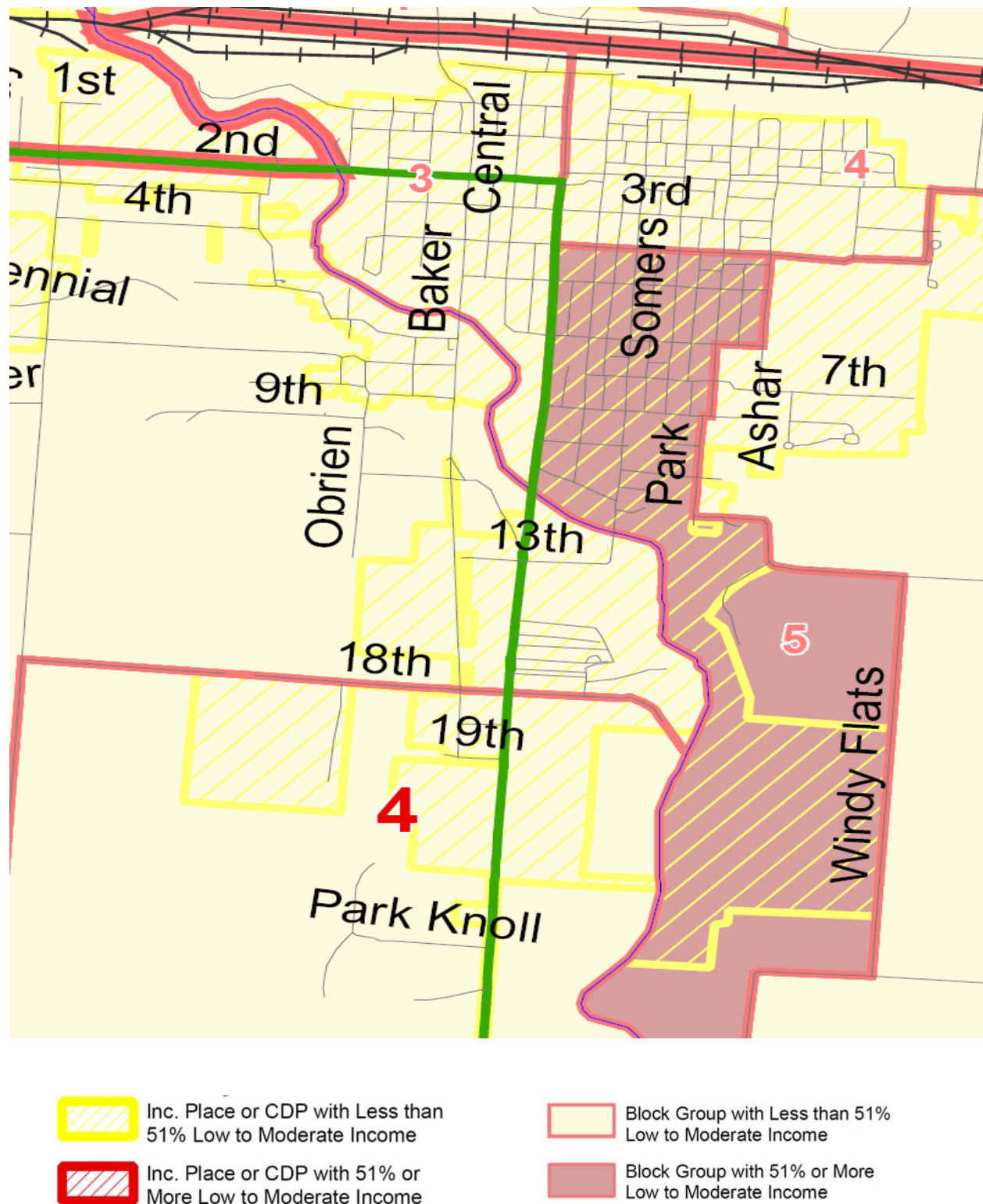
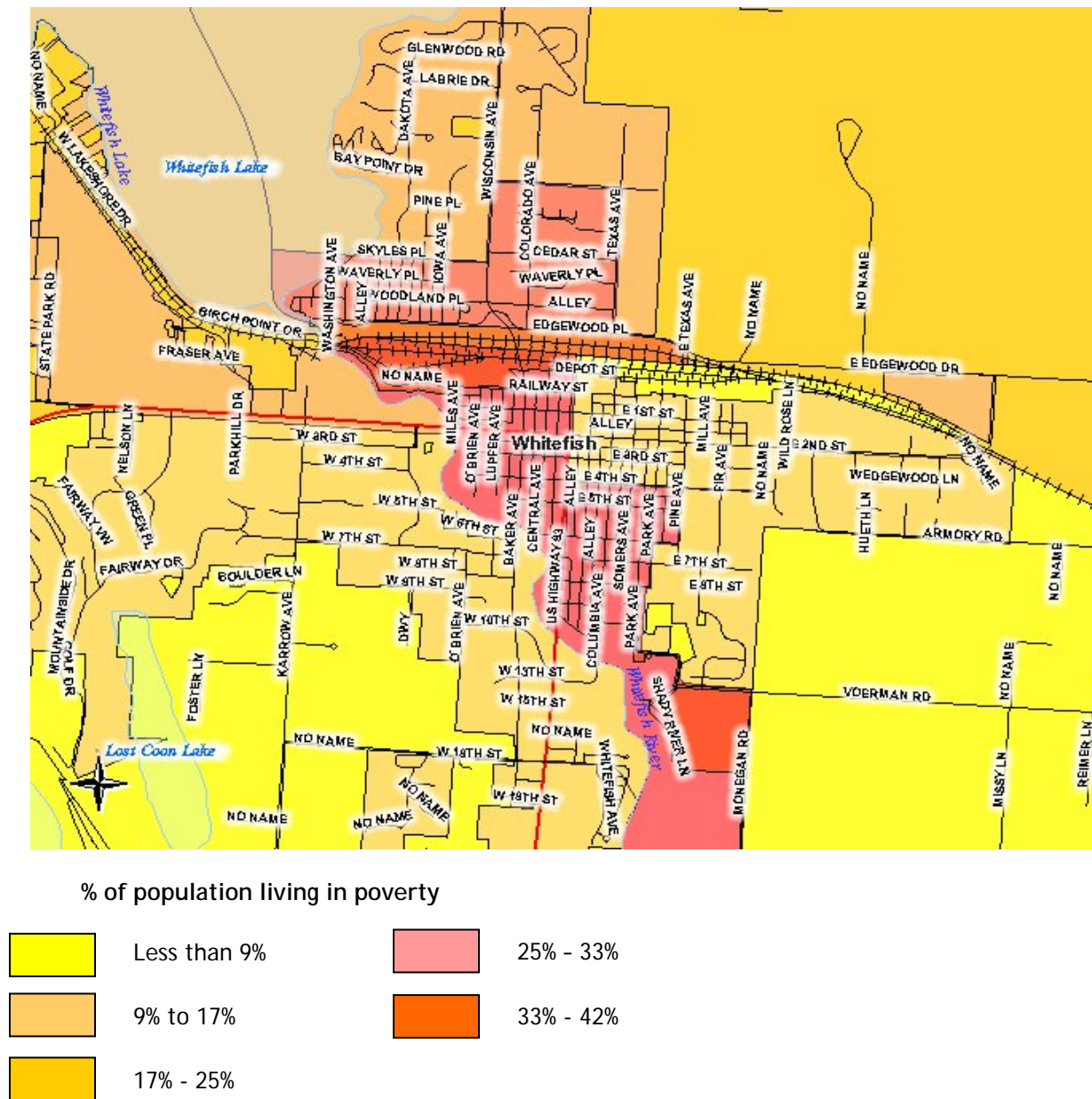


FIGURE 10: Poverty Status within the Whitefish Area



Traditionally Underserved Populations. Not all groups are specifically identified as being “environmental justice” populations but they may be traditionally underserved populations. For example, an elderly person or a disabled person who is not low-income or a minority would not be considered among the environmental justice population, as they are neither minority nor low-income. Therefore, two other traditionally underserved populations were identified—the elderly (age 65+ at the time of the 2000 Census) and disabled residents 5 years and older identified by the Census. **Table 8** shows the percent elderly and disabled populations and the share of elderly population living with a disability. Note that “disabilities” as identified by the Census includes sensory, physical, mental, self-care, “go-outside-the-home,” and employment disabilities.

Table 8: Census Block Groups with Underserved Populations Greater than the County Average at the time of the 2000 Census

Area Considered	Percent of Elderly (Age 65+) Population	Percent of Elderly Population with Disability	Percent of Population Age 5+ with Disability
State of Montana	12.6%	9.4%	28.7%
Flathead County	12.0%	8.5%	27.7%
Whitefish City	10.6%	7.6%	21.1%
Corridor Study Area	14.9%	--	--
Tract 3, Block Group 5 (all)	5.4%	4.2%	15.8%
Tract 4, Block Group 2 (all)	20.3%	14.3%	20.6%
Tract 4, Block Group 3 (all)	13.7%	14.0%	28.5%
Tract 4, Block Group 4 (all)	14.6%	1.4%	12.9%
Tract 4, Block Group 5 (all)	9.5%	4.0%	17.5%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (2000)

Three Census Block Groups within the general corridor study area (Census Tract 4, Block Groups 2, 3, and 4) contain larger percentages of elderly individuals than the county average. Additionally, the share of elderly individuals with disabilities was notably higher than the average for Flathead County in Block Groups 2 and 3 of Census Tract 4. Block Group 3 had a slightly higher percentage of individuals with disabilities than reported for the county but did not exceed the percentage for the State of Montana.

CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Flathead County Economy and Employment. Flathead County has a diverse economic base, which includes: manufacturing (primary metals, wood products, and high-tech), transportation (railroads), tourism and travel, the federal government (including the USDA Forest Service and the National Park Service), growing areas of healthcare, specialized services, construction, and retail trade. Flathead County was historically a natural resource based economy; however, the economy has changed and diversified over the last twenty years with strong growth in retail trade and service industries.

Table 9 displays Flathead County employment by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry classifications from 1970 through the year 2005. Between 1970 to 2005, the number of jobs in Flathead County more than tripled, from 15,627 jobs in 1970 to 57,538 jobs in 2005. Job growth in Flathead County steadily increased over the 1970-2005 period with the largest increase occurring during the 1990 to 2000 period. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of jobs in the county increased by nearly 16,000 representing an increase of nearly 50%. In 2005, the Flathead County economy supported an estimated 57,538 jobs, an increase of 8,260 jobs over the year 2000 level.

The five NAICS industries with the largest increases in the number of jobs over the 1970 to 2005 period were (in order): services; construction; retail trade; finance, insurance, and real estate; and local government. The service industry provided the largest number of jobs within the county during 2005 with health care, accommodations, and food services accounting for nearly 10,500 of the 24,308 jobs within the services category.

Table 9: Flathead County Employment By NAICS Industry for 1980-2000 and 2005 (Number of Jobs)

Sector	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Farm Employment	730	975	994	1,124	1,108
Agricultural Services & Forestry	169	273	501	1,223	842
Mining	40	17	95	227	394
Construction	674	1,626	1,925	4,183	6,671
Manufacturing	3,345	4,095	4,127	5,106	3,657
Transportation & Public Utilities	1,327	1,928	1,803	2,205	1,551
Wholesale Trade	501	862	971	1,198	1,289
Retail Trade	2,831	4,634	6,443	9,873	7,488
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	1,115	1,821	2,428	3,850	5,321
Services++	2,484	4,969	9,832	15,600	24,308
Federal, Civilian Government	461	743	865	851	839
Military	416	318	459	389	410
State Government**	307	420	495	551	582
Local Government**	1,227	2,024	2,320	2,898	3,078
Totals	15,627	24,705	33,258	49,278	57,538

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS Data Series, 2000.

US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, Table CA25N. Accessed: September 20, 2007 at <http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/action.cfm>

* Includes total full-time and part-time employment.

** For the year 1970, state & local government categories were not separated. Numbers shown are estimates based on percentages observed for categories over 1980 through 2000 period.

++ Represents aggregated total for several NAICS service categories

Information obtained from the Pacific Northwest Regional Economic Analysis Project (PNREAP) shows that over the 1969-2005 period, job growth in Flathead County has significantly outpaced that of the state and the nation. Flathead County's employment showed a 271% gain over the period as compared to 106% for the State of Montana and 91% for the U.S. during the 1969-2005 period.

Whitefish Area Economy and Employment. Historically, the economic foundation of Whitefish was based on timber, agriculture, and the railroad. However, during the 1950s and 1960s the local economy began an evolution toward an economy based on tourism, outdoor recreation, and service industries. The community has become a desirable location for new residents and visitors and resort development.

Whitefish experienced a surge in new housing construction in the early 1990s, which created a construction boom in the city and surrounding area. Although construction activity declined during the mid-1990s, the community is again seeing another significant boom in construction and new development activity. The increase is not limited to new housing units, but includes new commercial development, and expansion of resort development.

Table 10 presents employment data by industry for the City of Whitefish over the 1980 to 2000 period. The table shows that by 2000, more than 2,350 jobs existed in Whitefish and that 760 jobs were added to the local economy between 1980 and 2000. The table also indicates that significant increases in employment occurred in the entertainment and recreation sector, the finance, insurance and real estate industry, and construction industry. Health and professional services, retail trade, and services associated with the tourism industry constitute the primary employers. More than half of

the employment within the City during 2000 occurred in the professional services industry, the entertainment and recreation industry, and the retail trade industry. The only industries showing declines in employment during the 1980 to 2000 period were agriculture, forestry and transportation (railroad).

Table 10: City of Whitefish Employment By NAICS Industry (1980-2000)

Sector	1980	1990	2000	Net Change 1980-2000 (# jobs/percent)
Agricultural, Forestry, Fisheries, Mining	76	47	25	(51)/-67%
Construction	114	136	180	66/+58%
Manufacturing	202	194	171	(31)/-15%
Transportation	260	199	138	(122)/-47%
Communication, Other Public Utilities	33	27	64	31/+93%
Wholesale Trade	12	22	49	37/+308%
Retail Trade	253	400	314	61/+24%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	50	106	200	150/+300%
Business and Repair Services*	8	42	182	174/NA*
Personal, Entertainment, & Recreation	160	288	449	289/+180%
Professional Services	320	385	529	209/+65%
Public Administration	40	18	53	13/+32%
Totals	1,528	1,864	2,354	760/+54%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980, 1990, 2000

* Business and Repair Services category changed to Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census compiles an Economic Census that profiles the economy every five years, from the national to the local level. The 2002 Economic Census provides the most recent employment data for the City of Whitefish. Employment data for the City from the 2002 Economic Census is shown below. Please note that the sectors shown in **Table 11** do not correspond exactly with those presented previously.

Table 11: City of Whitefish Employment By NAICS Industry (2002)

Sector	# of Jobs
Health care & social assistance	475
Other services (except public administration)	90
Educational services	20 to 99
Administrative & support & waste management & remediation service	49
Wholesale trade	20 to 99
Retail trade	624
Real estate & rental & leasing	72
Accommodation & food services	952
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	316
Professional, scientific, & technical services	135
Information	34
Totals	2,787 to 2,945

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002 Economic Census

According to the Economic Development Element of the City's draft Growth Policy Update, the top five employers within the Whitefish area during 2006 include: North Valley Hospital (249 employees); BNSF Railway (225-230 employees); Whitefish School District (240 employees);

Whitefish Mountain Resort (up to 535 employees during peak times); and the City of Whitefish (101 employees).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Flathead County Population Projections. Projections are estimates of the population for future dates. They illustrate reasonable courses of future population change based on assumptions about current or expected demographic trends. Population projections (along with forecasts of future households and employment conditions) are used to predict future travel patterns, and to analyze the potential performance capabilities of the Whitefish area transportation system.

The Montana Department of Commerce Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) provides population projections through the year 2030 for all counties in the state. The projections available through the CEIC are developed by NPA Data Services Inc. and presented in 5-year increments and annually adjusted based on US Census Bureau estimates of county population. Local planning documents, like the recently approved Growth Policies for Flathead County and the City of Kalispell reference the NPA population projections for Flathead County.

Table 12 presents current population estimates and NPA population projections for Flathead County to the year 2030. These projections show a continuation of significant population growth in the county over the foreseeable future. The NPA data projections place the county's population could exceed 127,000 by the year 2030. This projection suggests nearly 42,000 more people will reside in Flathead County in 2030 and represents a 49% increase in population over the most recent (year 2006) estimate of population for the county (85,314).

Table 12: Population Projections for Flathead County

Year	NPA Data Services Inc. Population Projections ¹
2000 Census	74,471
2005 estimate*	83,079
2006 estimate*	85,314
2010	91,750
2015	100,250
2020	108,910
2025	117,870
2030	127,250

* 2005 and 2006 estimates of population for City of Whitefish from Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places in Montana, by County: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006. Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau Release Date: June 28, 2007.

¹ Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Dept. of Commerce, Helena, with permission from NPA Data Services, Inc., Arlington, VA dated 11/06.

Population Projections for Whitefish and the Corridor Study Area. The City of Whitefish and its planning jurisdictional area comprise only a small portion of Flathead County. Although County level population projections are indicative of overall growth rates and trends for future population, they are not sensitive enough to the unique growth characteristics of individual municipalities or other subareas of the County.

Population projections for the City of Whitefish and its planning jurisdictional area have been developed for the City's draft Growth Policy Update. Supporting documents for the draft Growth Policy include population projections to the year 2025. The projections, developed using linear and proportionate share methods, place the City's population at between 8,439 and 12,649 by the year 2025 depending upon the assumptions used in the linear forecast. The draft Growth Policy documents place the total population for Whitefish's planning jurisdictional area at about 17,500 by the year 2017 and between 14,065 and 23,348 by the year 2025.

Table 13 presents population projections for the City of Whitefish, its planning jurisdictional area, and the corridor study area through the year 2030. Population projections for the years 2010, 2015, and 2020 represent proportional allocations of population over 5-year periods considering the total population growth over the 2005-2025 period under both low and high growth scenarios. The low scenario represents a growth rate of about 1% per year and the high scenario corresponds to a growth rate of about 3.6% per year. These growth rates were used to generate projections for the year 2030 under each scenario.

Future populations for the corridor study area were generated by first identifying the anticipated increases in dwelling (housing) units for each Census Block within the study area between the year 2000 and the year 2030. This data was obtained from inputs used for the urban travel demand model developed for the Whitefish Transportation Plan. The total increase in dwelling units was multiplied by an average occupancy rate for dwelling units in the city to yield a total population increase for the corridor study area. This analysis identified an increase of nearly 630 housing units and a total population increase of about 1,290 residents by the year 2030. This total increase was then proportionally allocated over subsequent five-year periods starting between 2000 and 2030. This methodology showed the corridor study area population may exceed 3,300 residents by the year 2030.

Please note the numbers shown in **Table 13** reflect the results of mathematical calculations to proportionately allocate population over time periods or reflect growth rates applied to known population totals. While the numbers suggest a high degree of accuracy, it is not possible to project future populations to the individual. It would be reasonable to round the projections to the nearest 50 or 100 for discussion purposes.

Table 13: Population Projections for the City of Whitefish, Whitefish Planning Jurisdictional Area, and Corridor Study Area

	City of Whitefish		Whitefish Planning Jurisdictional Area		Corridor Study Area
	Low	High	Low	High	
2000 Census	5,032	5,032	--	--	2,067
2005^{(1)/(2)}	7,092	7,092	11,500	11,500	2,281 (est.)
2006⁽¹⁾	7,723	7,723	--	--	2,325 (est.)
2010⁽³⁾	7,429	8,481	12,141	14,462	2,495
2015⁽³⁾	7,766	9,871	12,783	17,424	2,709
2020⁽³⁾	8,102	11,260	13,424	20,386	2,924
2025⁽²⁾	8,439	12,649	14,065	23,348	3,138
2030⁽⁴⁾	8,813	14,617	14,791	27,841	3,357

Notes and Assumptions:

- (1) 2005 and 2006 estimates of population for City of Whitefish from Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places in Montana, by County: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006. Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau Release Date: June 28, 2007
- (2) Projected 2005 population for the Whitefish Jurisdictional Area, and Year 2025 projections of population for the City of Whitefish and Whitefish Planning Jurisdictional Area from City's draft Growth Policy Update documents released in February 2007.
- (3) Population increases under the "Low" and "High" growth scenarios for the City of Whitefish and its planning jurisdictional area were proportionally allocated over 5-year periods based on the total population growth projected over the 2005-2025 period under each scenario.
- (4) Populations were projected for the year 2030 assuming a continuation of growth rates for the year 2005 through 2025 under the "Low" and "High" growth scenarios for the City of Whitefish and its planning jurisdictional area.
- (5) The corridor study area population was projected by examining projected increase in dwelling (housing) units for the year 2030 in each Census Block and applying an average population per housing unit for 2000 Census Blocks in the corridor study area to yield a total population increase by the year 2030. The total increase in population was then proportionally allocated over five-year periods between 2000 and 2030.

FUTURE HOUSEHOLD AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

As part of the Whitefish Transportation Plan, future housing units and retail and non-retail employment for the Whitefish planning jurisdictional area were projected and allocated for each Census Tract and Census Block to facilitate the modeling of travel demands to the year 2030. The allocations of population and employment are consistent with assumptions about future land uses and growth outlined in the draft Whitefish Growth Policy Update. During the development of the travel demand model employed in the Whitefish Transportation Plan, Flathead County and Whitefish area planners, engineers, school officials, and other interested representatives met to identify areas of known planned developments and assign anticipated future growth within the community. The anticipated locations for future growth were then transferred to corresponding traffic analysis zones to facilitate travel demand modeling.

The forecasts of additional dwelling units and employment used in the Whitefish Transportation Plan and considered in the corridor study were presented to the Citizens Advisory Committee and the public for comments and input during July 2007.

The travel demand model used for the Whitefish Transportation Plan projects the Whitefish area (which includes the Whitefish Planning Jurisdictional Area and some adjoining land outside the jurisdictional area) assumes the number of housing units will increase by nearly 6,900 and more than 5,700 jobs will added by the year 2030. This represents an increase in numbers of households of about 94% over existing levels in 2003 (the base year considered by the travel demand model).

Similarly, retail employment and non-retail employment in the Whitefish area were projected to increase by about 80% and 74%, respectively, between 2003 and 2030.

As discussed previously, the Whitefish Urban corridor study area is projected to increase in population by about 62% and include nearly 630 new housing units over the 2000 to 2030 period. Likewise, retail and non-retail employment in the corridor study area is projected to increase notably by 2030. Nearly 1,440 new jobs, including about 580 new retail jobs and 860 new non-retail jobs, were forecasted to be added in the corridor study area by the year 2030.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

An environmental scan was conducted to identify environmental issues with the potential to influence the type, location, or design of improvements to US 93 considered in the corridor study and in future environmental evaluation processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The environmental scan also documents the concerns of environmental, regulatory, and resource agencies early in the process so that these issues can be considered during the development of recommendations for highway improvements. Topics addressed in the environmental scan are listed below:

- Geology and Soils
- Important Farmlands
- Water Resources and Water Quality
- Floodplains
- Fish and Wildlife Resources
- Wildlife Species of Concern
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Wetlands
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Hazardous Materials
- Cultural Resources
- Section 4(f) Resources
- Section 6(f) Properties
- Environmental Justice
- Utilities

The major findings of the environmental scan are discussed below.

Geology and Soils. The underlying geology and surface soils in the Whitefish area pose no limitations to highway development.

Important Farmland. While several soils in the Whitefish area are classified as “Prime Farmland” or “Farmland of Statewide Importance” by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, future improvements to US 93 corridor would likely occur entirely within existing highway rights-of-way or on lands already developed or committed to urban uses. As such, the Farmland Protection Policy Act does not apply since improvements to US 93 would not result in the conversion of “farmland” to nonagricultural uses.

Water Resources. The Whitefish River is the only surface water within the corridor study area that would likely be impacted by improvements to US 93. The highway currently crosses the river on Spokane Avenue and on 2nd Street west of the downtown. Another crossing of the river exists on Baker Avenue. The Whitefish River is considered an “impaired water” by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) because metals and other pollutants, nutrients, and undesirable water temperature changes limit two beneficial uses of the river (aquatic life support and the cold water fishery). Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for pollutants entering the Whitefish River will likely be developed by MDEQ sometime during the 2007-2009 period.

Although areas of seasonally high groundwater may be encountered within the corridor study area, this condition would not be a limiting factor to improving US 93 through the City.

Storm water issues include storm water runoff control during and after construction.

Floodplains. Floodplains delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency occur along the Whitefish River and Cow Creek, a tributary of the river. US 93 encroaches on the floodplain of the Whitefish River at crossings on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street west of the downtown area. Baker Avenue also crosses the delineated floodplain of the river. Improvements to US 93 would likely require one or more crossings of the Whitefish River and similar minor encroachments on its delineated floodplain.

Biological Resources. With the exception of riparian habitat and wetlands along the Whitefish River, residential and commercial development has eliminated most natural wildlife habitat within the city limits of Whitefish. However, wetlands and riparian lands along the Whitefish River do provide locally important habitat for some migratory birds, waterfowl, small mammals, and both white-tailed and mule deer. Urban landscaping and boulevard trees provide habitat for some small mammals and song birds.

Common loons, LeConte's sparrow, olive-sided flycatchers, and bobolinks, are wildlife species of concern that may occur in the Whitefish area. Since most of these species favor lake areas and wetland habitats, improvements to the existing corridor would be expected to result in minimal impacts to these sensitive wildlife species.

Eleven fish species can be found in the Whitefish River including three species of trout and several warm water species. Modifying existing structures or building new structures on US 93 would cause minor impacts to aquatic resources due to encroachments upon and/or require work within the Whitefish River.

Information obtained from the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) reported occurrences of 11 plant species of concern in the Whitefish area although none are in the corridor study area. No plant species of concern observed during field reviews for MDT's Whitefish-Urban and Whitefish-West reconstruction projects on US 93. From this information, the likelihood future highway improvements would affect sensitive plants appears low.

Canada thistle and spotted knapweed were commonly observed noxious weeds along the US 93 corridor in the Whitefish area along with scattered populations of ox-eye daisy, houndstongue, and orange hawkweed. Ground disturbances, such as those associated with highway construction, often present opportunities for the spread of noxious weeds.

Threatened and Endangered Species. Based on literature reviews and coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), it was concluded that the threatened bull trout and grizzly bear could potentially occur in the Whitefish area. Bald eagles (formerly listed as a threatened species) may occasionally be seen foraging for fish or waterfowl along the Whitefish River or lakeshore areas. The bald eagle was officially delisted on June 28, 2007; however, the species is still protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

- **Bull Trout.** Bull trout occur in Whitefish Lake and in the Whitefish River. Whitefish Lake and tributaries above the lake have been designated as critical habitat for bull trout by the USFWS. Although the Whitefish River is within bull trout range, it provides poor quality habitat for the species and is not considered critical habitat for the species.

Modifying existing crossing structures or building new structures at roadway crossings may encroach upon and/or require work within the Whitefish River. Construction activities could temporarily affect bull trout habitat and there may be potential for taking an individual fish. Due to these potential adverse effects to bull trout and its habitat at US 93 crossings of the Whitefish River, formal consultation with the USFWS may be required.

- **Grizzly Bears.** The City of Whitefish is located just outside the boundaries established for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), a designated grizzly bear recovery zone. Mapping information from the USFWS indicates grizzly bears could occasionally occur in Whitefish area. Improving US 93 is unlikely to result in a notable loss of habitat or cause other adverse effects to the species.

Wetlands. Wetlands within the Whitefish corridor study area exist along the Whitefish River and its tributaries. Wetlands within the existing highway corridor, delineated during project development activities for MDT highway projects, consist of narrow wetland fringes along the banks of the Whitefish River vegetated by emergent and scrub-shrub species. Impacts to delineated wetlands could occur due to the placement of minor amounts of fill associated with work at existing highway crossing structures or by building new structures.

Air Quality. The only air pollutant of concern within the Whitefish area are particulates—specifically PM-10 (particulate matter ranging in size from 2.5 to 10 micrometers). The Whitefish area was designated as a “moderate” PM-10 Non-attainment Area by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992. Whitefish continues to be classified as a Non-attainment Area, even though air quality standards have been met through local efforts to control PM-10.

PM-2.5 (particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers) is an emerging issue in Whitefish and air quality monitoring data suggests the community may be at risk of exceeding federal standards for 24-hour PM-2.5 averages.

An air quality impact analysis must be completed during the NEPA/MEPA environmental review to demonstrate that any recommended improvements to US 93 will not cause or increase PM-10 violations within the Whitefish area. MDT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will ultimately be required to make a conformity determination based on a regional PM-10 emissions analysis and a qualitative localized (hot-spot) PM-10 analysis for improvements to the US 93 corridor.

Although Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs) do not pose a major concern in Whitefish, this pollutant must be considered in a future NEPA/MEPA document for improvements to US 93.

Noise. Residences located along Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue represent the most sensitive noise receptors in the corridor study area. Concentrations of residences exist along Spokane Avenue between 4th and 6th Streets; along the east side of Baker Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets; along most of Baker south of the Whitefish River; and along 2nd Street west of the Whitefish River between Baker and Karrow Avenues. City park areas are present along both sides of Baker from 5th Street to the Whitefish River.

Traffic within the Whitefish area will likely continue to increase with or without improvements to US 93, and this would likely increase the traffic noise to neighboring properties. Any changes to the road system that would increase traffic volumes or move travel lanes closer to current receivers would also likely increase the traffic noise at the receivers. Such changes are most likely along the existing US 93 corridor or other new arterial connectors.

Noise modeling conducted for the Somers-Whitefish Final EIS in 1993 predicted noise levels at numerous receptors along existing sections of US 93 and Baker Avenue would approach or exceed the NAC. The 1993 evaluation predicted that no receptors would experience a “substantial increase” in noise levels (defined as 10 dBA or greater in the Final EIS) by the project design year (2015). Although this conclusion appears reasonable, there have been no recent measurements of ambient (existing) noise levels or noise modeling using the FHWA’s current Traffic Noise Model to verify if this is the case.

Hazardous Materials. Databases identifying hazardous materials site locations within the general corridor study area, such as registered underground storage tank (UST) locations, leaking underground storage tank (LUST) sites, and petroleum release sites were reviewed for the environmental scan. This review identified 24 such sites within the corridor study area.

The database search did not identify any facilities listed on EPA’s Toxics Release Inventory or generators, receivers, and transporters of hazardous waste listed on the EPA’s RCRA Information System (RCRIS). However, one A CECRA Priority Site (State Superfund Site)—the Burlington Northern Fueling Facility—exists near Railway Street and Spokane Avenue at the north edge of downtown Whitefish. The site is not adjacent to US 93 and there appears to be a low potential for encountering such contamination within the existing highway right-of-way.

A Phase II Hazardous Materials Assessment was prepared for MDT’s Whitefish-Urban and Whitefish-West project areas during 2005. The assessment identified numerous sites in the Whitefish-Urban project area with documented or potential hazardous material contamination issues. These sites included locations on underground storage tank lists; observed commercial users with a moderate to high potential of using, storing or generating hazardous materials/wastes; and sites where potential concerns exist due to past and/or present land uses.

Work completed for the assessment also involved drilling and sampling to verify the extent of subsurface contamination within the highway right-of-way at several locations. Subsurface petroleum impacts were identified at the following areas along the existing US 93 corridor:

- Intersection of Spokane Avenue and 8th Street
- Intersection of Spokane Avenue and 3rd Street
- Intersection of Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street
- Intersection of Baker Avenue and 2nd Street

Contaminated sediments along the Whitefish River were identified at the existing highway culverts on Spokane Avenue, at existing bridges on 2nd Street and Baker Avenue, and in the vicinity of 7th Street where a new bridge across the Whitefish River was proposed in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish Final EIS.

A gasoline seep along the Whitefish River within the limits of the corridor study has resulted in environmental concerns regarding contaminated soils and affected water quality. Efforts are underway by MDEQ's Petroleum Release Section to assess the problem and determine how to address the gasoline seep.

Historic and Archaeological Resources. Previous cultural resources inventories of properties adjoining Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue identified numerous historic buildings and several neighborhoods adjoining US 93 that could potentially comprise a Whitefish Historic Residential District. The cultural resource surveys have identified 30 individual properties determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and/or contributing properties to a potential Whitefish Historic Residential District.

Historic properties could be directly affected if improvements require expanding existing rights-of-way. Improving the existing highway could also indirectly alter the visual and aesthetic character of the areas surrounding these resources. Although improvements within the existing US 93 corridor could cause minor impacts to historic properties, it is unlikely that such improvements would jeopardize a future nomination of this possible residential historic district.

Section 4(f) Resources. Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, protects public parks and recreation lands, wildlife habitat, and historic sites of national, state, or local significance. The environmental scan identified the following Section 4(f) resources that could be affected by the reconstruction of US 93:

- **Public Parks and Recreation Lands:** Three City-owned parks—Riverside Park, Baker Park, and Kay Beller Park could potentially be impacted by improvements to US 93 or Baker Avenue. The permanent use of land from these parks is unlikely, but reconstruction of the existing US 93 corridor or new construction on Baker Avenue could result in minor, temporary effects to these parks during construction. Improvements to US 93 would not affect the playground at Central School.

Section 4(f) does not appear to apply to the City of Whitefish's pedestrian and bicyclist trail system because the trails have not been designated specifically for recreational and are not functioning primarily for recreation purposes.

- **Wildlife Habitat:** There are no wildlife or waterfowl refuges that would be affected by improvements to US 93.
- **Historic Sites:** As stated previously, some 30 historic properties were identified within the corridor study area and many of these properties are individually eligible for the NRHP or are contributing elements to a potential Whitefish Historic Residential District. Reconstruction of US 93 could result in minor Section 4(f) impacts at some of historic properties along Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, or Baker Avenue.

Section 6(f) Properties. The City of Whitefish, Flathead County, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MDFWP) have completed 10 projects in the community with funds made available through the National Land & Water Conservation Fund Act. Kay Beller City Park is the only Section 6(f) property in the corridor study area. Improvements to the

US 93 urban corridor would not affect Kay Beller Park; however, MDT's Whitefish-West project may cause minor and temporary impacts to the recreation site.

Utilities. City of Whitefish water and sewer infrastructure is extensive within the corridor study area. Municipal water and/or sewer lines exist beneath portions of Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street and Baker Avenue and cross these streets at numerous locations. Reconstruction along the existing US 93 corridor or Baker Street could conflict with municipal water or sewer lines at numerous locations.

Overhead power lines, overhead and underground telephone cables and fiber optic lines, and natural gas distribution lines cross or exist adjacent to the Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Some of these utilities may be in conflict with future improvements to the US 93.

BNSF Railway facilities would not be affected by improvements to the US 93 corridor.

Whitefish Critical Areas Ordinance. On March 3, 2008, the Whitefish City Council approved the Critical Areas Ordinance (Ordinance No. 08-04) to regulate development in "critical areas" within the community. Under the ordinance, critical areas are defined as "a critical stormwater conveyance, stream, lake, wetland, or a slope with potential for erosion hazard or instability." The ordinance also establishes buffers (setbacks) for each type of critical area. Buffers are areas contiguous to a critical area determined to be needed for the continued functioning and/or structural stability of that critical area.

The stated purposes of the ordinance are to:

- Maintain the community's ability to manage stormwater through protection of "critical conveyances."
- Protect and improve the quality of the Whitefish area's water bodies, including lakes, streams, and the Whitefish River, which are central to the community's identity and values.
- Protect public safety, public and private property, and water quality from threats of landslides and other geologic instability.
- Protect property from damage due to high groundwater levels or changes in natural groundwater levels.
- Protect and preserve the lawful use and enjoyment of private property.

The Critical Areas Ordinance sets forth standards and regulations to meet these purposes and procedures that must be followed for applicants (property owners or their agents) to document compliance with the ordinance.

Future reconstruction of US 93 through Whitefish could require encroachments or crossings of the Whitefish River and its associated riparian zone and could impact wetlands. The environmental scan for this corridor study and previous discussion in this memorandum has generally addressed these "critical areas." Several federal and state regulations (i.e., Sections 402 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, Montana Stream Protection Act, and Floodplain Management regulations) will apply if these "critical areas" are affected by future highway construction.

MDT is not exempt from compliance with the Critical Areas Ordinance and would have to follow the City's procedures if road, bridge, or trail construction encroaches on critical areas. Section 2.F of the Ordinance indicates public agencies and utilities may apply for a Reasonable Use Exception if the application of the ordinance would prohibit a development proposal. This section also indicates the public agency or utility is also required to demonstrate that the application of the ordinance would unreasonably restrict the ability to provide services to the public. Section 2 Subsection D.1 through 5 of the ordinance outlines the procedures and requirements for a Reasonable Use Exception.

Section 2.Subsection C.2 of the Critical Areas Ordinance includes an exemption for the "operation, maintenance, repair, modification, or addition to existing structures, infrastructure improvements, utilities, public or private roads, dikes, levees, or drainage systems, if the activity applies best management practices and does not further encroach within a critical area or buffer and there is no increased risk to life or property as a result of the action."

As of April 2, 2008, this ordinance is in effect for the entire Whitefish Planning Jurisdiction.